

*Observations on a Greek Inscription, brought from
Athens. By Daniel Wray, Esquire.*

Read at the SOCIETY of ANTIQUARIES, April 18, 1771.

I Take the liberty to communicate to the Society *an ancient inscription*, which I met with some months ago in the possession of Mr. Jones, of Finchley, a worthy old gentleman, who is retired from business to a pleasant spot in that village.

WALKING with him in his garden, I saw lying in several places broken bas-reliefs, and other fragments of antiquity. My friend, observing me look at them with an eye of curiosity, said, he had something more of that kind to shew me; and pointing to the inscription, wished me to explain it; for those, who had yet seen it, could make nothing of it. I immediately saw the letters were in general Greek; but there were some characters intirely new to me; and I begged, he would indulge me with the loan of the marble, that I might consider it more at leisure.

UPON examination I soon found, that the whole made no continued sense; but *that each line contained one proper name*; all which I easily made out to my satisfaction, interpreting the unknown letters by those which accompanied them, and agreeably to the genius of the language in the formation of such names.

IT was no small mortification to find that our inscription would settle no point of history or chronology, nor illustrate any Grecian custom, civil or religious; being merely a list of names, without any addition to inform us whether they were Athenians or Spartans, warriors or magistrates, living or dead. The list was originally longer, the stone being broken at the top and
A bottom,

except the 2^d

bottom, and parts of letters remaining in both places. There is also IMARNA at some distance, and in a different direction; of which, I confess, I can make nothing.

THERE is enough however to excite our curiosity in the manner of writing. The terminations ΕΣ and ΟΝ for ης and ων, prove it prior to the introduction of the long vowels; and most of the letters are of the most ancient form; and some not to be found upon any marble, though sufficiently warranted either by coins, or by passages of ancient authors.

THE marble gives us eighteen letters, very well cut and preserved; some occurring often, and always similar. They are placed in regular files from top to bottom (a circumstance, in which the Sandwich marble and some others agree.) So that in the beginning of the lines, where the stone is broken, more than once, we are sure how many letters are wanting, and the restoring of them becomes almost certain.

THE letters, whose forms are most remarkable are [a] D δ, ⊕ θ, ⊖ λ, Η ξ, ○ ο, [b] R ρ, V υ, ⊙ φ, + χ, and ⊕, which I take to be Κοππα, the Latin Q. D, R, and V, agree exactly with the Latin; which was the case in general with the early Greek alphabet, according to the elder Pliny and Tacitus [c]. ⊕, ⊙, +, are no less ancient [d]. ○ with the dot is rare (indeed that figure sometimes stands for ⊖.) Η is said to be found only on medals [e]. And ⊖ I cannot trace in any remains of antiquity, or

[a] D occurs in the *Farnesian* inscription of *Herodes Atticus*, which, according to the best critics, is an imitation of the oldest manner of writing.

[b] The *Baudelotian* inscription has R with a shorter tail.

[c] Pliny, L. VII. c. 58. Tacitus, *Annal.* XI. 14.

[d] ⊕ in *Deliac* inscription. ⊙ in *Deliac* and *Baudelotian*. + in *Sigean* and *Baudelotian*.

[e] By *Montfaucon*, in *Palaeographia Græca*, page 142. I do not remember to have seen it with the middle horizontal stroke so long ⊕, or turned on its side Η.

in any of the collections of alphabets [f]; but the words Telestas [g], Cleon, and Aischylos, leave no room to doubt of its power here. ϙ is well known as an Επισημον, or *numeral character*; and it plainly is derived from the Phœnician and Hebrew q, 𐤒, and is the parent of the Roman Q. It has appeared upon *no marble* hitherto discovered; but is to be seen on *the coins of Crotona and Syracuse*, in the place of K, in the names of those cities [h]. And *that letter* it will stand in the stead of here, in Α V ϙ Θ Δ Θ R K Α Σ, from Λυκος [i].

THE omission of the long vowels, the very ancient form of so many characters, and the rest with no particular mark of a later æra, observable upon the same stone with the Θ, Ξ, Φ, Χ, double or aspirated letters, and the V also, excluded by many critics from the original Greek alphabet, give force to the suspicions of some good judges [k], that *the opinion of that alphabet's being confined*

[f] Except in the *Nouvelle Diplomatique* of the Benedictins, who give 𐀀 under the letter Α, in their alphabet of the third and subsequent centuries after Christ, which can have nothing to do with the age of our inscription. 𐀀 has been used in the place of the *Aeolic Digamma*, and of the *Aspirate Spirit*. In the sums of money upon the *Sandwich Marble*, Dr. Taylor understands by it a fraction of the drachma, most probably the *Obolus*. Taylor's *Marm. Sandvic.* p. 43.

[g] Telestes, by an undeniable restoration of the T, is the name of a poet in the *Parian Chronicle*, No. 79. Σ is never doubled in the same syllable; so Τελεσσας is probably an error of the graver.

[h] Thus C and Q are indifferently put in Latin; cocus, coquus; locutus, loquutus. ϙ is also found upon many *Syracusan* coins; where it is supposed to be the first letter of *Corinth*, of which city *Syracuse* was a colony. All these coins I had the opportunity of seeing in the most perfect preservation by the favour of our worthy brother Mr. Duane; whose elegant collection is always open to the curiosity of his friends.

[i] Λυκοδορκας (perhaps ας for κς, as in Τελεσσας) *looking like a wolf*, as γλυκυδεγκης, λιθοδεγκης. So λυκοθεσσης, *bold as a wolf*.

[k] Mr. Bourget of Neufchatel, in *Biblioth. Ital.* tom. xviii. and Mr. le Clerc, in *Biblioth. Choisie*, tom. xi.

to sixteen letters, and its being preserved in that imperfect state at Athens, till the Archonship of Euclid, in the 94th Olympiad, though generally taken to be the case, is without foundation. Our inscription, found in the middle of Athens, retains the *short vowels*, yet admits the letters called *Palamedean* and *Simonidean*. The *Baudelotian* inscription (cited by Montfaucon, *Palaeogr. Graec.*) brought from Athens, which contains a mortuary list of the tribe Erechtheis, and bears its own date, almost fifty years prior to Euclid, has the *short vowels*, with four of those *new letters*, as they are called. And the curious marble lately imported from Athens also, engraved at the expence of the *Dilettanti Society*, has nearly the same particulars, and carries also its own date, four or five years before Euclid. It is safer therefore, amidst the various accounts of the ancients, the contradictory passages of the later scholiasts and grammarians, and the very different inductions of our modern critics, to rest in the general idea, that the Greek alphabet is derived from the *Phoenician*; and to leave the question whether all the letters were imported at once, or which came in earlier, which later, as a point hard to be decided, and of small importance.

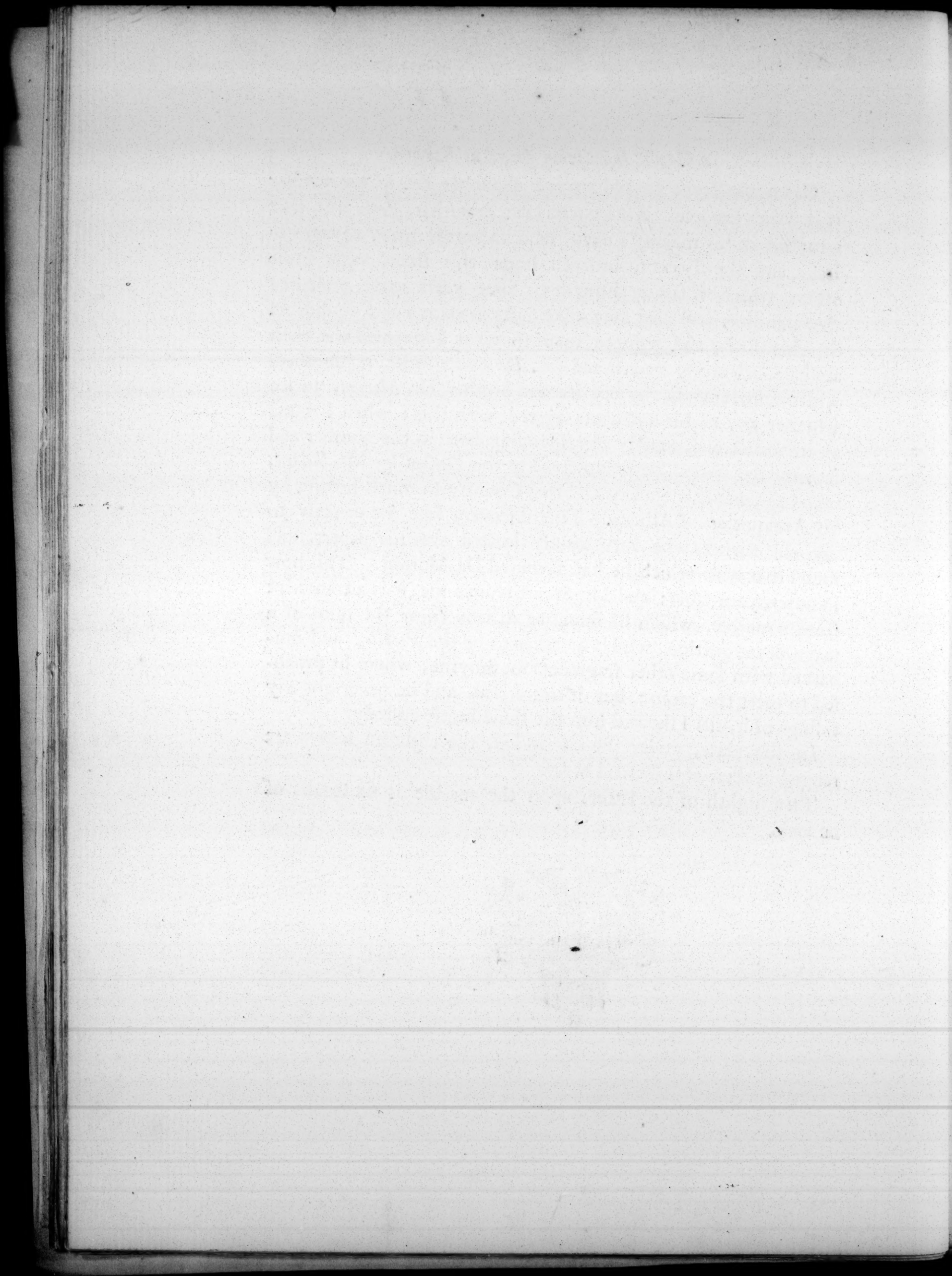
THE regularity and neatness of character observable upon our marble are unusual in very ancient inscriptions; and are difficult to reconcile with the truly antique forms of most of the letters. From these forms however, as nothing can be argued from the sense of the inscription, we can alone make any conjecture about its age. The *Baudelotian*, of Olympiad 82, has many letters approaching to ours, but not so well drawn; and expresses the ξ by $\chi\sigma$. That possessed by the *Dilettanti*, of Olympiad 92, agrees in those particulars, and has $\phi\sigma$ for ψ . But those characters upon ours, which are unquestionably of an older form, give it the fairest pretence to at least as early a date.

GIVE me leave to add a word about *the fate of our marble*: it is rather singular. All I could learn from Mr. Jones was, that a captain in his majesty's navy, who had made many voyages to Italy and the Levant, brought home this stone, with those others which I saw at Finchley, some years ago; presented them to him, and died soon after. As soon as I had considered the characters, and reduced them to what I supposed was their alphabetical order, I consulted Dr. Bernard's Table, republished, with improvements, by our learned brother Dr. Morton, to see whether any of his alphabets agreed with this: when I found an imperfect one, exactly corresponding both in the number and shape of the letters, communicated to the Doctor by Mr. Stuart, who has done this Society and this Country so much honour by his Antiquities of Athens. This discovery sent me directly to my old friend, who very kindly looked over his papers, and found that with which he had favoured Dr. Morton. This now lies upon your table; and Mr. Stuart assures me, it is a transcript from a marble, which he found at Athens (near the ruins of a magnificent portico, which he takes to be the *Poikile*) and embarked with some other fragments for Smyrna, where he proposed to meet the cargo; but it miscarried, and he never got any tidings of it, till I shewed him the stone in my custody.

IN the plate, under the inscription, the eighteen letters are ranged in their alphabetical order.

THE highth of the letters upon the marble is six tenths of an inch.





[7]

[φο]ινιξ

. . λεας

[τ]ραχας

τελεστας

δαμοφανες

θυμαρες

δαικλες

συλιχος

δερεκετος

λυφοδορκας

κλεον

κρατιαδας

[αι]σχυλος

μαρινα

I N I H
 T E A Σ
 R A + A Σ
 T E T E Σ Σ T A Σ
 D A M ⊙ ⊙ A N E Σ
 ⊕ V M A R E Σ
 D A I K T E Σ
 Σ V T I + ⊙ Σ
 D E R K E T ⊙ Σ
 T V ⊙ ⊙ D ⊙ R K A Σ
 K T E ⊙ N
 K R A T I A D A Σ
 Σ + V T ⊙ Σ
 A R + I

I
M
A
R
N
A
 ^

A D E ⊕ I K T M N H
 ⊙ ⊙ R Σ T V ⊙ +